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**Media Analysis Report
Friday, September 15, 2017
DR-4332-TX**

Hot Issues –

- **Social Media Hot Issue:** Survivors continue to express frustration over hotels not accepting the vouchers received by FEMA. They're also becoming slightly more irritated by the lack of options, including no trailers being made visible or available. *Please see the Social Listening Report for further details.*

Noteworthy issues:

Texas General Land Office to lead Harvey housing effort

Madlin Mekelburg, USA Today Network –[Reporter-News](#) –September 15, 2017

AUSTIN — The Texas General Land Office, the agency tasked with managing state-owned lands, will oversee short- and long-term housing for Texans displaced by Hurricane Harvey, Gov. Greg Abbott announced Thursday....

Hurricane Harvey's Survivors Still Reeling; Thousands in Shelters, Hotels Three Weeks Later

By Sean Breslin-[Weather.com](#) –September 15, 2017

It has not been an easy road for the survivors of Hurricane Harvey, trying to piece their lives back together three weeks after the storm changed everything. Some 20,000 people are still in shelters or hotels 20 days after the hurricane made landfall along the Texas coast, according to CNN.com. Some have yet to get their power restored, the report said, while others are unable to live in their storm-damaged homes, so they've been forced to sleep elsewhere...

U.S. Small Business Admin sets up recovery center for SE Texas businesses at Lamar University

[12News](#) –September 14, 2017 ... *SBA was made aware of the incorrect date, which is listed below. A rapid response will be provided.*

BEAUMONT - The U.S. Small Business Administration has opened an SBA Business Recovery Center at Lamar University to help businesses in Southeast Texas. The center will open Friday morning, Sept 18, at 8 a.m...

Media Monitoring Trends –

Print/Online –

- As recovery continues, one of the most readily discussed topics in media is housing. Not only has Governor Abbot said he would seek \$50 billion in federal housing funding, but it's also weighing heavily on the minds of survivors, who have yet to reoccupy their homes and recapture a sense of normal.
- While the concern is not as prevalent as it's been in previous reports, some survivors tell the media they're still worried that their needs are being overlooked and overshadowed by the devastation in Florida.
- The outpouring of support for Harvey survivors continues as several additional benefit concerts were announced and volunteers stepped up their efforts in flood-ravaged communities. Besides repairing homes, delivering household goods, and simply working to clear away debris, many of the volunteers have been the "shoulder to lean on" and someone to listen as survivors face the reality of their situations.

Radio/Television –

- Reiterating the disaster-related coverage surfacing in print media, broadcast media has consistently mentioned the openings of DRCs. Additionally there have been periodic recovery progress reports and reminders to survivors about the importance of registering for disaster assistance.
- With regard to the recovery itself, several communities have reminded viewers that their residents are still reeling from the disaster. Whether it be a lack of power, homes that remain uninhabitable, or a lack of finances to “feel whole again,” the frustration is mounting as some survivors lose confidence in the ability to move forward.
- The topics of flood maps and flood insurance are starting to become more visible in daily on-air reports, but continue to be somewhat overshadowed by conversations surrounding housing, environmental hazards and the pure devastation that has survivors searching for solutions to a multitude of disaster-related obstacles.

Social Media –

- Conversations related to Hurricane Harvey remain steady with survivors covering a gambit of topics.
- That said, there does appear to be some frustration among some of those survivors as various hotels are rumored to not be accepting the vouchers and there has yet to be any sign of the so-called FEMA trailers.
Mentioned in the hot issues section above
- Some say FEMA leadership is lacking, but mostly due to the fact that survivors are growing frustrated and restless with the recovery process. While the emotions continue to grow, not all are negative.
- To learn more about today’s social media trends, please refer to the Social Listening Report at the end of this document.

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What Others Are Saying –

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Video/Audio –

Texas General Land Office to lead Harvey housing effort

By Madlin Mekelburg –[Caller-Times](#) –September 15, 2017

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Governor Abbott suspends Corpus Christi's budget, property tax rate deadline

[KIII TV](#) –By Jonathan Munson, KIII – September 15, 2017

CORPUS CHRISTI (KIII NEWS) - Governor Greg Abbott issued a proclamation Thursday to suspend the deadline for the City of Corpus Christi to adopt a budget and property tax rate. The City Council approved Tuesday on first reading a two-cent increase in the tax rate in order to raise money to fix the streets. Under Texas law, the City has until Sept. 30 to adopt a budget and property tax rate, and requires that three public meeting be held beforehand so the public can have input. The governor's proclamation will suspend that Sept. 30 deadline so that those still dealing with Hurricane Harvey's aftermath can still have a chance to participate in those public meetings....

"We're going to make it personal," Edmond students learning about Hurricane Harvey by helping victims

By Lacey Lett –[News4Oklahoma](#) –September 15, 2017

EDMOND, Okla. - Pens, notebooks and gift cards fill a classroom at Heartland Middle School, but none of the supplies will be used by Oklahoma students. Instead, students at Central Middle, Cheyenne Middle and Heartland Middle School have been gathering as many supplies as they can to help hurricane victims...

Beaumont family who escaped Harvey to Waco struck by second tragedy

[WWLTV](#) –September 15, 2017

WACO - One month after Hurricane Harvey, tragedy has struck a father and his daughters for the second time. Days after checking into a Waco Hotel to escape the storm, Joseph Ardoin's wife suddenly died – leaving him with little money and five girls to raise...

Gas prices finally going back down after post-Harvey spike

By Rachael Cardin –[WTKR](#) –September 15, 2017

Good news for families who plan to travel this weekend; gas prices are on the decline! After Hurricane Harvey hit the Gulf Coast, the nation saw a major spike. But now that oil refineries are back online, the prices are going down...

Comanche County to provide hurricane relief

By Haley Wilson –[KSWO](#) –September 14, 2017

LAWTON, OK (KSWO) - Comanche County Emergency Management is teaming up with local volunteer firefighters, businesses, the city of Lawton and Walmart to host a drive to collect donations for hurricane Harvey victims this Saturday. They decided to have this drive when residents started asking where they could donate to hurricane Harvey victims...

Full Stories –

RECOVERY

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Madlin Mekelburg, USA Today Network

[Reporter-News](#)

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The GLO will also work with the federal Housing and Urban Development Department to administer the Community Development Block Grant Program, according to Abbott.

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Officials predict it will take years to fully recover from the storm, which left more than 70 people dead and destroyed countless homes in Houston and along the Gulf Coast. As cities and counties look to start the lengthy rebuilding process, residents are relying on temporary housing assistance from FEMA and help from volunteers distributing clothing, food and water donations.

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More: Exclusive: Get an aerial look at Aransas County after Harvey

Hannes said there are not enough temporary units available to those who need them and people are being housed in hotels and apartments across the state, not in areas near their homes.

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Paul Corah, a FEMA spokesman in Corpus Christi, said temporary housing is offered to residents in 30-day bursts, which can be renewed depending on an individual's situation. Across the state, 1,595 hotels are enrolled in FEMA's Transitional Shelter Assistance Program — at least three of which are in Corpus Christi.

"Obviously FEMA is not going to make people whole, but Texans are very proud people and they got hit hard," Corah said. "Our job is to pick them up, dust them off and point them in a different direction. We're trying to give them a helping hand."

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Gerard Stolar, FEMA's branch director for the Coastal Bend region, said the new long-term housing initiative will be largely driven by state and local leaders, with the federal government playing a "leading from behind" role.

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More: Sharp promises fast action as post-Harvey rebuilding czar

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Weather.com

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At least 75 deaths have been reported from Harvey – more than the combined death toll in the Caribbean and United States from Hurricane Irma, as of Thursday evening.

At Houston's George R. Brown Convention Center, where more than 10,000 evacuees took shelter during the storm, at least 1,000 people who fled Harvey remained there Thursday morning, according to KHOU.com. The Red Cross is preparing to move those evacuees to a different shelter 11 miles away at the Northwest Mall, a largely abandoned shopping center.

They're hoping to have all evacuees out of the convention center by Saturday, Mayor Sylvester Turner said, and the city continues to work with all who lost their homes on an option that would set them up with six months of free housing, KHOU.com also reported.

"All I'm wanting to do is go home," Candace Levee, who was among the 2,000 evacuees still in the NRG Center shelter, told KHOU.com on Monday. "I don't want to be in a shelter."

The waiting game, coupled with the horrors of the massive storm, has taken its toll on some. Mental and behavioral health officials have descended on the shelters, offering to speak with anyone who feels overwhelmed by the situation, according to NBC News.

"The general idea is losing everything, what do we do now?" Karen Winston, a clinical social worker who works at the Baylor College of Medicine, told NBC News. "I'll ask people where they're from and they can't give me the neighborhood they're from. They say, 'I think I'm crazy,' but they're not crazy. They're suffering."

4,000 Texas homes, facilities without power weeks after Harvey, governor says

[CBSNews](#)

September 14, 2017

AUSTIN, Texas -- An estimated 4,000 Texas homes and other facilities are still without power weeks after Harvey slammed the state, Gov. Greg Abbott said Thursday.

Abbott said at a news conference that Texas expects to seek more than \$50 billion in federal housing funding for recovery.

Winnie, Texas, and the Hurricane Harvey victims the news doesn't show

Abbott said those displaced by the storm can seek help via community development grants covering long-term housing needs as well as temporary costs while waiting for their homes to be repaired.

Texas begins recovery from Harvey's catastrophic damage

The governor said he's been told by the White House and members of Congress that as many as three more federal aid packages for Harvey victims may be approved before the end of the year. Congress already passed \$15.3 billion for initial Harvey recovery.

Harvey drenched Texas -- especially in Houston, the state's largest city -- with five days of rain after first making landfall on Aug. 25 near Corpus Christi. The storm made a second landfall on Aug. 29 in southwest Louisiana, about 40 miles from Beaumont, Texas, leading to more devastating floods.

Harvey could become one of the nation's costliest storms ever.

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[Reporter-News](#)

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Governor tours Austin FEMA Command Center

By Rudy Koski

[FOX7](#)

September 15, 2017

A small army of 2000 emergency response managers with FEMA has set up shop in what was the corporate office for Golfsmith. What's being teed up by the 2000 workers is part of a unified effort to help the communities damaged by Hurricane Harvey.

Gov. Greg Abbott was briefed on the recovery work coordinated out of this central location in N Austin.

"This is incredibly impressive, and I'm awestruck by how effective they are and how compassionate they are

working to help Texans rebuild,” said Abbott.

Abbott was joined by Texas A&M Chancellor John Sharp, who heads up the Governor's recovery commission.

The main goal, according to Sharp, is to strengthen lines of communication with local leaders and catch any potential miscues. "Where you really get in trouble, where local governments don't get this paperwork right, then all of a sudden 5 years from now you've got the federal government clawing back money from them, because some previous mayor or previous judge didn't fill out the paperwork right," said Sharp.

Debris removal is among the biggest jobs at hand.

130 debris removal sites have been set up by TCEQ.

It's estimated that 200-million cubic yards will be collected. That's an amount that could fill Kyle Field at Texas A&M 125 times, according to the governor. "It is going fast, but candidly not fast enough," said Abbott.

There was also an assessment on schools.

52 campuses are listed as catastrophic
234 with significant damage.
678 needing some type of repair.

"Over the course of the year, we will be analyzing every issue associated with Harvey, very similar to how we responded from the Ike and Rita to Hurricanes," said Mike Morath with TEA.

38 relief aid distribution centers are opened between Port Aransas and Orange County. 28 shelters, as of Thursday, have 5250 people in them. Innovation is the word that was used to describe the recovery process- especially with providing temporary housing. Providing a fleet of federally purchased trailers, like what was done after Hurricane Katrina, apparently isn't in the works.

"But manufactured housing, and recreational vehicles may be an option that a local government chooses to use, and we are not going to prohibit them from doing that, but we are going to work through our local governments and state agencies as to what's the best solution that takes care of getting folks back into the affected areas, they can get their kids back to school and go back to their jobs and get back to their normal life," said Tony Robinson with FEMA.

The state General Land Office will also help with the housing problem.

The plan is to use Community Block Grants and it's estimated that more than \$50 billion will be needed.

Don't wait on repair, tossing debris, FEMA says

By Stephany Garza

[The Facts](#)

September 15, 2017

ANGLETON — Piles of debris lined streets along Tamarind Woods subdivision Thursday morning, some with makeshift signs reading “don't take” and other variations. County and federal officials aim to quell the rumor centered around these signs.

Officials received reports of residents not removing flood-damaged debris from their homes until a Federal Emergency Management Agency and insurance representatives looked at it. The common belief is it would disqualify them from receiving funds, according to the Brazoria County website.

“It's important to get rid of those painful reminders,” FEMA spokesman William L. Rukeyser said. “We want that debris to be gone from people's property. Of course, document it. It's so vitally important so we have not only a full understanding of losses, but we have proof as well. It's vitally important to take pictures.”

For those who are waiting on their insurance adjuster to assess damages, City Manager Michael Coon advises residents consult their insurance company.

“Check with the insurance company to find out their policy, but there are a lot saying to just take pictures and feel free to move to the curb for debris pickup,” he said.

Another common mistake people make after a disaster is delaying contractors from making repairs to the home, he said.

“It’s totally untrue,” Rukeyser said. “If you’re handy and you can replace that broken window or door that got ripped off and you can hang a new door or buy a door and install it — go ahead and do it. Take pictures of you doing it, have the receipt from the hardware store or get the contractor to write on the bid it’s a result of flood or wind damage.”

Documenting everything through photos and keeping records of all expenses is the best thing to do, he said.

For those needing help registering for FEMA assistance, agency representatives will be at West Columbia City Hall, San Jacinto Room at 512 E. Brazos Ave., from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. today, Disaster Survivor Assistance specialist J.D. Cui said.

FEMA representatives began registering residents at the West Columbia location Wednesday, but it’s not an official Disaster Recovery Center. A highly visible FEMA communications van parked outside West Columbia’s City Hall gained attention from passersby, Rukeyser said.

“People started knocking on the door asking, ‘What can we do about this and what can we do about that.’ We normally work in teams going door-to-door and helping people register. But because it was high-visibility and people going there, we pulled disaster assistance people together, set up portable tables in the heat outside to help, then the city very kindly offered us that room on a temporary basis.”

FEMA representatives assisted 200-plus residents Wednesday. By Thursday afternoon, about 91 residents signed in either to get registered or find out their status, Cui said.

Tammy Garcia of Brazoria was one of the residents who went to speak with FEMA representatives. While going through the process with her flood insurance claim, representatives advised her to begin filling out paperwork for assistance, she said.

Her home on CR 244 received about 4 feet of water, which displaced her and her family.

“The insurance company came out and said the house is totaled,” she said.

Another big concern is replacing her 11-year-old daughter’s wheelchair and other handicap equipment. The equipment was custom-made to fit her daughter’s needs, she said.

For those wanting to add their house to a crisis clean-up database, residents can call 979-864-1064 starting at noon today and from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, county spokeswoman Sharon Trower said.

The household is added into a database which is shared with various organizations who are coming into the area to clean out houses with flood debris, she said.

Harvey recovery continues in Texas town of Bayside

[UMTOnline](#)

September 15, 2017

BAYSIDE, Texas (AP) — Sharon Scott, 75, has been mayor of this tiny community on the southwestern shore of Copano Bay for only a couple of months.

The Houston Chronicle reports she assumed office when her predecessor resigned unexpectedly.

"If I'd known Harvey was coming, I think I would have said no," she said Thursday morning. Sitting at the kitchen table in her stepmother's house, the expression on her face was a combination of grin and grimace. In the next room, her 101-year-old father, a retired shrimper and Bayside pioneer, lay on a hospital cot under hospice care.

Scott's father, J.D. Derrough, was with out-of-town relatives when Hurricane Harvey roared ashore three weeks ago at Rockport, 15 miles across the bay. Scott rode out the storm with her daughter, son-in-law and three dogs in their Bayside home. As the wind howled deep into the night, people and dogs moved from room to room seeking safety from crashing windows, collapsing ceilings and water rising throughout the house.

"That wind just would not stop," Scott recalled. "For 12 hours, the wind blew."

The next morning, with Harvey headed east toward Houston, Scott walked down the road to her own two-story modular home with its superb view of the bay. Windows were out, the roof was gone and most everything inside was ruined.

Many of her neighbors in this quiet, unassuming little community, population 325, were even worse off. Barbara and Eddie De Luna, Bayside residents for 32 years, stayed with relatives in Seguin the weekend of the storm. They came home to find their mobile home literally flattened, as if a bomb had exploded inside and propelled everything outward.

"It was my worst nightmare," De Luna said Thursday, as a group from an Abilene church cleared away debris that used to be her home. "I told my husband it was like a nightmare in a horror story, and I'm still trying to wake up from it."

For now, the De Lunas are living in a Motel 6 in Beeville. They plan to stay in Bayside. Maybe they'll build a house, she said.

"Eighty percent of the homes are not livable," the mayor said. "Without help, we don't have the manpower to get back on our feet. We have two maintenance guys who work for the city and two office people. That's it."

Among those unlivable houses is a magnificent mansion on the bay, now leaning perilously to one side. It was constructed by John Howland Wood, a New Yorker who moved to Bayside's predecessor community, St. Mary's on the Aransas, in 1836, in time to participate in the Battle of San Jacinto. He and his wife, Nancy, constructed their rambling Greek Revival mansion in 1875. It was a house big enough for their 12 children.

They had high hopes for St. Mary's, and for several years, the town was a thriving port. Ships offloaded lumber onto wagon and cart trains bound for Refugio, Goliad, Beeville, San Antonio and Uvalde. That period of prosperity and promise ended in 1886 when the San Antonio & Aransas Pass Railway chose Rockport over St. Mary's. Two speculators in the early 1900s laid out Bayside near the St. Mary's site, but the town never became the thriving community they envisioned.

These days, traffic between Refugio and Corpus Christi speeds by on FM 136. Coastal Bend residents are likely to know Crofutt's Sandwich Shop, a 4-decades-old landmark famous for its sandwiches made with homemade bread, its cinnamon rolls and its cookies. Otherwise, little Bayside offers little reason to stop.

Today, Crofutt's sits beside the highway, locked up and empty. Owner Lorraine Short hasn't decided whether to reopen. "People are going to be disappointed if she doesn't," Scott said.

Among the retirees and second-home Texans living in Bayside are several newcomers, families with children. The mayor worries that they won't stay post-Harvey.

"So far, we've heard that eight families, and counting, are not coming back," she said.

That's also a concern to city council member Gloria Derrough, who's married to the mayor's centenarian father.

"Property taxes and a water system are our only sources of income," she said. "We need to help people to stay."

Bayside, like Houston, has land-use and affordable housing issues to deal with after the storm. Residents who want to stay need a place to live while they're rebuilding, and the current Bayside zoning codes don't allow single-wide trailers.

"It's really an important issue," Derrough said. "It's going to affect Bayside's future, and we're just starting to address that. Are we going to break the ordinance and allow single-wides? Single-wides just for a year? Single-wides forever? We're trying to reach out to citizens, and some of them can't afford to rebuild."

After a barbecue lunch on Thursday provided to Bayside residents and volunteers by a West Texas rancher named Mike Gibbs, the mayor walked over to her ruined house, the home she and her late husband built in 1970.

Before digging through files hoping to find insurance papers, she glanced across the sparkling bay, toward what her husband always called their "million-dollar view."

"At least my pier stayed," she said. "My husband built it for me, because he knew I liked to fish. Someday I'll get to fish again."

Harvey evacuees remain in limbo in San Antonio

By Priya Sridhar, KENS

[12News](#)

September 14, 2017

SAN ANTONIO - It's been nearly three weeks since Hurricane Harvey made landfall and displaced thousands of Texans, about a thousand people ended up in local evacuation shelters. Wednesday almost two dozen boarded buses to head home to Beaumont, Corpus Christi and Houston.

"I'm very excited about that because I've just been waiting so patiently," said Tamara Davis, a Harvey evacuee heading back to Beaumont.

Others like Michelle McGowen know that there's nothing to go back to, the Aransas Park resident says her entire trailer is gone.

"I want to relocate to San Antonio because they have more resources, it seems and they're trying to help us," she said.

Several evacuees like McGowen can't get temporary housing through FEMA until they go back to their property even if they don't have any plans of rebuilding.

"Their house has to be determined to be uninhabitable and that's where the complication has come in because many of these people obviously can't get back to their home to let an inspector in to deem whether the house is habitable or not," said Jann Tracey with FEMA

For the evacuees that are left at Kazen Middle School, it's been an emotional road. Many say they want to begin the recovery process and don't want to be forgotten in the mix.

"We will not close the doors unless we know there is a viable option to go somewhere else," said Henry Van de Putte from the Red Cross.

Texas Begins Long March Toward Recovery From Hurricane Harvey

[County Record](#)

September 14, 2017

AUSTIN — as contaminated waters receded and mountains of debris from flooded homes and ruined belongings grew last week, a picture of post-hurricane Texas developed and the process of weighing impacts to lives, property and infrastructure began.

Gov. Greg Abbott delivered a series of announcements and proclamations related to catastrophic flooding and wind damage brought by Hurricane Harvey to more than 50 Gulf Coast and inland counties in late August and early September.

For Flooded Homeowners, What to Do and What to Avoid During Repairs

By Joseph Fanelli

[Houston Press](#)

September 15, 2017

One of the unfortunate effects of the unprecedented flooding from Hurricane Harvey is the number of Texans dealing with water in their homes for the first time. A report from the Center for Watershed Science at the University of California-Davis found that 50 percent of the flooding in Harris County occurred in areas outside of official flood zones.

Between clearing out your damaged belongings, dealing with insurers and finding a contractor you can trust, the days after the flood can be just as stressful as the deluge itself. We talked to three experts who can help: Rob Hellyer, the owner of Premier Remodeling and a member of the Greater Houston Builders Association; Joe Woods, the vice president of state government relations for the Property Casualty Insurers Association of America; and Brian Spitz, president of Big State Home Buyers, a Houston-based company that buys and sells homes.

As you start, or continue, to repair your home, here is a list of what to absolutely do and what to absolutely avoid to make sure the process goes as smoothly as possible.

Do clear out your house within 48 hours after floodwater recedes, Hellyer says.

The sooner you can move anything that's been touched by floodwater, the better. Mold starts to build on soggy materials within about two days, so don't wait until your insurance agent shows up before starting the muck-out process.

Do take more photos than you will need, Woods says.

Because you have to move fast before your agent arrives, you'll have to document everything that's been affected. Take as many photos as possible – even more than you'll likely need. Don't just photograph the kitchen; take photos inside drawers that have been swamped, inside cabinets and anything that's been ruined by floodwater. Also, keep any receipts of purchases for cleanup. Those are likely refundable as well.

Do wear protective face masks, Hellyer says.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggests using N95 face masks (which shield 95 percent of the tiny microbes in the air) when dealing with areas possibly infected by black mold, which can be dangerous for anyone with asthma or severe allergies. Likewise, any debris touched by floodwater has also been exposed to the mixture of nasty germs floating in the water. Long-sleeve shirts and pants might be a good idea, especially if you have any cuts or scrapes.

Do remove sheetrock and insulation, Hellyer, Woods and Spitz say.

The water that entered your house has seeped into the walls as well. There are differing opinions on how high above the water lines drywall should be cut. Some say at least two feet above the flood level. Hellyer isn't as sure about that, but said four feet up along walls is typically a good idea because sheetrock is cut in four-foot sheets.

Don't use bleach, Hellyer says.

After you've cleared out all the infected debris, the house will need to be coated with antimicrobial spray to kill mold. Bleach, especially when diluted, actually encourages mold growth because of the amount of water in it that then seeps into wood. It is also extremely corrosive, and will evaporate to where it can cause damage to the skin, lungs and eyes.

If you have insurance or can afford it, do use a professional remediation team for mold removal, Hellyer says.

Hellyer is unequivocal about this. "I can't recommend strongly enough to get a professional mediation company to do the dry-out," he said. It's one of the most important parts of the process. Moisture level in the frames of your house needs to be below 17 percent. After a flood, those levels can be as high as 50 percent, Hellyer said. The house just can't air out, especially in a city as humid as Houston. Dehumidifiers and air removers will be brought in to prevent water from wrecking your home.

If it's done incorrectly, you might have to cut back into your walls.

Don't hire a contractor without doing your due diligence, Woods and Hellyer say.

This is the one area Woods called the "No. 1 hazard" for homeowners. While there are many good contractors out there, there are just as many "folks in the streets in their pickup trucks trying to take people's money," he said.

There is a host of resources to learn more about your potential contractor. Organizations like the Better Business Bureau offer good insight, as do trade agencies. On the Greater Houston Builders Association website, contractors are listed with certificates of expertise. You can also ask potential contractors how long they've been in business and if they have a physical office in Houston, to expose potential scammers.

The Texas Attorney General's Office also released a list of steps to take to avoid being defrauded, like asking for referrals, getting multiple estimates beforehand and copying the license plate of the contractor. The office warned never to hand an insurer's check directly to a contractor before work is done. Woods said you may have to place a small down payment, but don't pay for the service until you're satisfied.

"It's bad enough your house has been flooded; you don't want to be victimized again by a bad contractor," said Hellyer.

If you do decide to sell, "don't hold out for price," Spitz says.

It's a lot to ask, but "you have to separate yourself from the emotion," Spitz said. The sooner you decide to sell the house, the more you will likely receive in return. Spitz said he remembers that after the Memorial Day floods devastated Meyerland in 2015, homeowners who waited six months to sell received about \$50,000 less than their neighbors who sold early. Already, Spitz has contracted eight houses on a single street in Bear Creek. Understand there is a surge in supply and "you're handing off a big problem," he said. The return likely will not be as much as you want.

As with contractors, do your research before settling on an investor. Be wary of out-of-towners, Spitz said. The day after floods started, he received calls about investors going door to door in certain neighborhoods. Check the seller's website, his credentials and ask how many flooded houses he's bought. If the number seems too high, it is okay to question how well they can remodel all the homes.

For those without flood insurance, do check out these options.

There are some options for those without flood insurance, which could be as high as 80 percent of Houston homeowners. FEMA offers quick disaster grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$30,000. For longer-term fixes, the U.S. Small Business Administration might be your best option. Despite the name, the agency is actually the federal government's arm to hand out low-interest loans for homeowners seeking disaster relief. Homeowners can borrow up to \$200,000 at interest rates as low as 1.75 percent – or about half the typical mortgage or college loan. Renters can also borrow as much as \$40,000. As of Thursday afternoon, the small business agency had handed out \$172 million in disaster loans to Texans.

FEMA program meant to help those displaced by Harvey

By William Blanchette, KBMT

[12NewsNow](#)

September 14, 2017

FEMA is working with state officials to solve the Harvey produced housing crisis by repairing homes. According to Orange County, the agency is currently limited on resources for those needing help from the effects of Harvey.

"We have had meetings with FEMA," said Brint Carlton, Orange County Judge. "Their resources are stretched pretty thin over the large areas of Texas and Florida."

Since hurricane Harvey, 1,700 trailers have been issued from FEMA for the purpose of temporary housing.

"Some of the trailers have been delivered to Jefferson County," said Carlton. The state of Texas and FEMA are trying to provide a program for people who are trying to get back in their homes. "

The program is called the "Sheltering and Temporary Essential Power" (STEP).

"The goal of the program is to get the flooded stuff out of people's homes and making sure they are able to live in it," said Carlton.

According to Orange County, the availability of the STEP program will be ready by Monday.

ENVIRONMENT

EPA won't release benzene levels collected post-Harvey; private tests show elevated levels

By Kiah Collier

[Texas Tribune](#)

September 14, 2017

As a longtime resident of Manchester, Guadalupe Hernandez is used to the chemical smells that waft through his southeast Houston neighborhood, a low-income, predominantly Hispanic community near a Valero Energy refinery.

But when Hurricane Harvey blew in the weekend of Aug. 26, the stench became noticeably stronger for about five hours, a scent like "glue or boiled eggs," he said.

The Environmental Protection Agency has assured the public they looked into complaints in the area a week after the storm hit, and spent several days taking air pollution measurements with a mobile laboratory. The agency didn't release any specifics, but said concentrations of several toxic chemicals, including the carcinogen benzene, met Texas health guidelines.

Now, environmental advocacy groups have shared their own, detailed data with ProPublica and the Texas Tribune, based on air sampling from the same Manchester streets over six days. It shows a more nuanced picture than the one given by the EPA: in numerous locations, benzene levels, though under the Texas threshold of 180 ppb, far exceeded California's guideline, which is 23 times more stringent and is well-respected by health advocates nationwide.

About 10 of the benzene measurements exceeded California's limit of 8 ppb. (Neither California's nor Texas' guideline is legally enforceable; both are thresholds that can trigger regulatory scrutiny).

The readings may not have exceeded Texas' guideline, but they're still higher than usual, "and they are concerning," said Elena Craft, a senior health scientist at the Environmental Defense Fund, which sponsored the monitoring with Air Alliance Houston. "Did we actually capture the highest concentrations that blew into the neighborhood or not? We don't know."

The two highest benzene concentrations, 90 and 77 ppb, were detected within 1,600 feet of a damaged storage tank at the Valero refinery. At the time the data was collected, the wind was blowing from the direction of the tank toward the monitoring sites.

Valero reported on Aug. 27 that the rain from Hurricane Harvey had submerged the tank's floating roof, releasing benzene and crude oil. Satellite images from Aug. 31 released by DigitalGlobe show the caved-in tank at the refinery.

Air pollution experts say much of the benzene would have dissipated by the time the advocates began monitoring on Sept. 4. The EPA started its sampling a day later. Days before either monitoring effort, the city of Houston detected a single benzene concentration of 324 ppb in Manchester.

Hernandez said he believes the fumes he noticed during the hurricane came from the refinery. Margarita Zepeda, another Manchester resident, also remembers a strong smell during the storm.

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"During normal rains it would never smell bad but during [the hurricane], it did — chemicals, I guess. And I'm not the only one. All the neighbors" could smell it, too," Zepeda said.

The EPA said in a statement they inspected the refinery last week and were satisfied the company was making the necessary repairs. Valero did not respond to a request for comment.

Craft said EDF and Air Alliance Houston decided to take air samples after the hurricane triggered the release of millions of pounds of air pollutants from industrial facilities. They hired Entanglement Technologies, a California-based firm with a mobile monitoring lab, for \$20,000, with the bulk of the funds coming from EDF.

"It's resource-intensive to bring folks from California, but we felt the threat was real enough to warrant it," Craft said.

The researchers monitored four different air pollutants, but the focus remains on benzene, a compound so potent that the American Petroleum Institute, a trade group for the oil and gas industry, acknowledged in 1948 "the only absolutely safe concentration ... is zero."

Jill Johnston, an environmental health professor at the University of Southern California who wasn't involved in the monitoring, said because the samples were taken over a period of minutes, it's hard to tell if the elevated levels were brief spikes or representative of longer-term air quality. If those concentrations persist over days or weeks, then the community would be at much higher risk, she said.

Bakeyah Nelson, executive director of Air Alliance Houston, said the benzene is an added burden for fenceline communities that already have higher-than-average rates of asthma, cancer and other illnesses associated with continuous chemical exposures. The eastern side of Manchester, where most of the measurements were taken, is wedged between the refinery, two highways and multiple railroad tracks.

"This is real stuff, this is not theoretical. If you go there and try to breathe you can literally taste the petroleum and gasoline that's in the air," said Mustafa Ali, a former EPA environmental justice official who is now senior vice president of climate, environmental justice and community revitalization at the Hip Hop Caucus.

There are families in these communities who can reach through their backyard fence and touch the piping of the nearest facility, Ali said.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, the state environmental regulator, has dozens of stationary air monitors across Texas, but the ones in Harvey-affected areas were temporarily turned off during the storm. That's why mobile, on-the-ground monitoring is so crucial, and the EPA and TCEQ should have "every available unit out there," Craft said.

She was frustrated when TCEQ officials told her in a meeting on Tuesday that a sophisticated TCEQ air monitoring unit — capable of gathering real-time, precise data in the field — has been in Austin since the storm, and wasn't deployed to Houston.

"If not now, when?" she said. "I feel like we've been doing the agency's job."

TCEQ spokeswoman Andrea Morrow did not respond directly to inquiries about the unit, but two other environmental advocates who attended that meeting confirmed TCEQ told them it was sitting in an Austin garage.

Morrow, in an emailed statement, said TCEQ and EPA investigators have used handheld monitoring equipment to survey facility fence lines, and sponsored aerial surveys to spot potential pollutant leaks. She said TCEQ would release its data once it's validated.

The EPA didn't respond to inquiries about the detailed data that came from its Manchester monitoring. The agency has posted maps showing additional monitoring it has conducted in other communities, but not the concentrations it found, only that all levels met Texas guidelines.

Aside from Manchester, Entanglement found another high benzene reading of 76 ppb at an industrial zone in Port Arthur, several miles from a residential area.

Hilton Kelley, a well-known community organizer in Port Arthur, said he noticed "a very pungent odor of sulfur dioxide and other toxic chemicals" during the week Entanglement was monitoring the air. "It makes your eyes water, it stings your sinuses, and it creates a scratchy feeling in your throat," he said.

The Port Arthur area is a hub of industrial activity including a Motiva refinery and an Oxbow facility that processes petcoke — a byproduct of oil refining.

Since the hurricane, local health concerns have been overshadowed by the more pressing need for housing, as hundreds of residents were evicted from damaged homes, Kelley said. "When your stomach's growling and you're sitting on the curb with three or four kids in the hot-ass sun, pollution is the last thing on your mind."

In the long-term, Kelley said he wants the TCEQ to put continuous air monitors at facility fence lines in Port Arthur. The current TCEQ monitors in Port Arthur only sample benzene and other air toxics once every six days.

Garden cleanup after the hurricane

By Laurie Garretson

[Victoria Advocate](#)

September 14, 2017

A hurricane can be a stressful experience. The strength of the wind and amount of rain has a lot to do with the amount of damage that's done. Damage or not, we've all been affected by Harvey in one way or another. Lack of safe drinking water and the lack of electricity are a couple of the problems Harvey brought us.

All the plants in your yard have also been affected by Harvey's visit. Plants can be stressed just as all other living things can be. It might not show it in major ways, like having a large tree uprooted, but it sure can show in more subtle ways like dry, brown or droopy leaves and even death.

The major stressor Harvey brought most of our landscapes was a lot of powerful winds that lasted for a long time. Wind of all magnitudes can stress plants depending on their sizes and types.

Damaged perennials should be cut back to the undamaged part of the stems if they are showing signs of brown leaves, droopy stems or lack of vigor. Established perennials should then have the strength to flush back out and regain its health. Feeding and watering, as needed, will play a big part in how well things in the landscape recover.

Many of us still have dead tree limbs piled on our front lawns waiting to be picked up and taken to the landfill. Needless to say, this isn't good for the lawn under the dead limbs. Thick, heavy layers of limbs and debris can

quickly smother any plants under them. You may be replanting that area of lawn grass after the dead debris is removed. Feeding will help revitalize all your lawn, flowerbeds, vegetable gardens, trees, fruits, nuts and anything else that experienced Harvey.

Until next time, let's try to garden with nature, not against it, and maybe all our weeds will become wildflowers.

FLOOD INSURANCE

FEMA will need more funding for flood insurance program due to Hurricane Harvey

By Dave Kovaleski

[FRNNews](#)

September 15, 2017

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) said it will need Congress to increase funding for the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to cover costs associated with the damage from Hurricane Harvey in South Texas.

FEMA estimated that it will need as much as \$11 billion as there have been some 84,000 claims related to Harvey. NFIP only has about \$5.8 billion left of the \$30 billion it borrows. This is just to cover Harvey as no estimates have come out yet for Hurricane Irma.

The NFIP is administered by FEMA, which works with nearly 90 private insurance companies to provide flood insurance to property owners and renters in NFIP-participating communities.

Rep. Jeb Hensarling (R-TX) said Congress must get serious about fixing the NFIP. The program was set to expire on Sept. 30. There have been several bills in Congress to reform the NFIP as part of reauthorization. Due to the storms, the NFIP was extended until Dec. 8 to give Congress more time to come up with reforms before it's reauthorized.

"Four years ago, after Hurricane Sandy, I warned my colleagues in Congress that the National Flood Insurance Program needed serious reform because it was not sustainable and was just one major storm away from needing another bailout. That sadly appears to be where we are today," said Hensarling, who was one of 180 members of Congress who voted against Hurricane Sandy relief.

"Because Congress failed to enact reforms over the past four years, the program can't meet the needs of flood victims without another bailout. To continue as is, with no reforms, is a slap in the face to both homeowners who depend upon it and hardworking taxpayers who have to bail it out once again," Hensarling added.

Hensarling said the NFIP in its current form is unsustainable and subsidizes people to live in harm's way.

"With pricing structures that do not reflect the reality of risk, it actually encourages the building and re-building – and re-building again – of homes and businesses in flood-prone areas. That is neither smart nor compassionate," Hensarling said. "After Harvey and Irma, it would be insane for the federal government to simply rebuild repetitive loss homes in the same fashion, in the same place."

Hensarling said the Financial Services Committee has produced legislation that seeks to stabilize the flood insurance program more stable and affordable.

GOVERNMENT/ POLITICS

Harvey-battered churches sue for FEMA funds

[BRNow](#)

September 15, 2017

Three small churches damaged in Hurricane Harvey's unprecedented Texas deluge are jointly suing a U.S. government agency for access to public recovery funds.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) religiously discriminates against churches by preventing them from seeking disaster recovery funding available to other nonprofits, the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty alleges in the suit filed Sept. 5 in Houston federal court.

The churches, Rockport First Assembly of God in Rockport, and Houston-area Harvest Family Church and Hi-Way Tabernacle, augment their case with a June U.S. Supreme Court decision affirming a church's right to participate in generally available programs on equal footing with secular organizations. None of the churches are Southern Baptist.

FEMA summarily bars churches from seeking emergency aid because churches primarily use their buildings for religious purposes, Becket said in its press release announcing the case.

"FEMA's policy violates the Constitution, as the Supreme Court recently ruled 7-2 in *Trinity Lutheran*," the law firm said.

In *Trinity Lutheran Church v. Comer*, the court said Missouri violated the church's right to exercise its faith freely by barring it from participating in a government-run, playground resurfacing program. The exclusion "from a public benefit for which it is otherwise qualified, solely because it is a church, is odious" to the U.S. Constitution, the court said in its June 26 opinion.

President Donald Trump supported the Texas churches' case in a Sept. 8 tweet. "Churches in Texas should be entitled to reimbursement from FEMA Relief Funds for helping victims of Hurricane Harvey (just like others)," the president tweeted.

FEMA regularly uses houses of worship as relief shelters as it used Hi-Way Tabernacle after Harvey, Becket said. Three feet of flood water accumulated in Hi-Way Tabernacle's sanctuary.

"After the costliest and most devastating natural disaster in U.S. history, the government should come to the aid of all, not leave important parts of the community underwater," Becket counsel Diana Verm said in the release. "Hurricane Harvey didn't cherry-pick its victims; FEMA shouldn't cherry-pick who it helps."

Repeatedly, FEMA has denied aid to houses of worship after such disasters as 2005's Hurricane Katrina and Superstorm Sandy in 2012, turning down a Jewish Chabad, a homeless shelter church ministry and a Unitarian Universalist congregation, the law firm said.

"Houses of worship are playing a vital role in helping Texans recover from this horrible storm," Verm said. "It's time for FEMA to start helping the helpers, not continue a policy of irrational discrimination against churches."

The suit, *Harvest Family Church v. Federal Emergency Management Agency*, was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas.

Becket describes itself as a non-profit, public-interest legal and educational institute working "to defend the free exercise of all faiths, from Anglican to Zoroastrian."

Legacy of Harvey and Irma Turns on FEMA's Post-Disaster Response

By Brett Lingle

[Brink News](#)

September 15, 2017

Hurricane Harvey destroyed vital roads, public infrastructure, and hundreds of thousands of homes across Houston and southeast Texas. In Florida, Hurricane Irma has left communities reeling with widespread blackouts, severe coastal flooding, and crippled telecommunications systems. When floodwaters finally recede and the debris is cleared, recovery will be long. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will be in these areas for

years. And costs will reach well into the billions.

President Donald Trump has promised a swift and robust federal response. Congress passed legislation to provide an initial \$15 billion to FEMA, HUD and the Small Business Administration (SBA) for disaster relief. And so far, 700,000 Texas residents have registered for federal assistance, with more than 50,000 placed in temporary housing.

As early damage estimates approach \$200 billion across Florida and Texas, what will the federal government's response look like? How will FEMA help communities and families in the coming months and years? And how much federal funding can the affected areas expect? Those questions are difficult to answer until the water recedes and damage assessments are completed, but FEMA's response to previous hurricanes may provide some clues.

FEMA spends more on hurricane recovery than on any other type of disaster. Data from OpenFEMA indicates that of the \$81.1 billion (nominal dollars) of post-disaster aid the agency has distributed from 2005 to 2016, 70 percent was for hurricane response and recovery. Severe storms and floods accounted for another 25 percent, and all other disasters accounted for just 5 percent.

FEMA delivers post-disaster assistance through three major programs: the Public Assistance (PA) Program, the Individuals and Households Program (IHP), and the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). The PA program provides funds to state and local governments for debris removal, emergency protective measures, and the repair and reconstruction of public facilities. IHP provides two types of assistance: Housing Assistance (HA), which goes toward the repair or replacement of damaged homes or temporary housing needs, and Other Needs Assistance (ONA), which may be used to cover disaster-related expenses such as transportation, medical expenses, funeral costs, or replacing personal property. Finally, HMGP provides funds for measures to reduce damages from future disasters. This includes actions such as implementing flood control projects, elevating homes, or buying out high-risk properties and preserving them as open space.

Since 2005, 72 percent of FEMA's hurricane relief funds (\$41.5 billion) have gone to state and local governments through the PA program. Roughly 20 percent (\$11.2 billion) was provided to individuals and families through IHP, and another 8 percent (\$4.8 billion) was provided through HMGP.

Texas Congressman Is Investigating Reports of Horrific Conditions in Hurricane Harvey-Hit Prisons

By Rafi Schwartz

[Splinter News](#)

September 14, 2017

Democratic congressman Lloyd Doggett has launched a formal inquiry into why residents of a prison facility near the Texas-Louisiana border were not evacuated during Hurricane Harvey—and whether rumors of horrific post-Harvey conditions in the prison are true.

This week, Doggett (D-TX35) announced he had contacted the Federal Bureau of Prisons “to express my concern and obtain clarification about what actions are being undertaken to protect the wellbeing of prisoners and staff and to restore the facility to pre-disaster conditions.”

While parts of Beaumont, TX were placed under either voluntary or mandatory evacuation orders, inmates at the city's three federal and three state prisons were reportedly left behind to deal with nearly a week without water, frequent power outages, and sanitation hazards exacerbated by the storm.

In a September 8 interview with Democracy Now, Rachel Villalobos relayed her incarcerated husband's account of the post-storm conditions in the prison complex:

He explained the amount of food they were getting, which was two sandwiches a day, eight ounces of water. He said that the prison did get water in it, that all the inmates are using the number one and number two in bags, just to reserve the toilet water, so they could drink the toilet water. I explained to him, “Don't drink the toilet water. Don't drink that water in Beaumont.” You know, it has bacteria and all kinds of infestations in it. And he said, at this moment, he didn't care. If the water didn't kill him, then the situation was going to kill him. He said he was so

dehydrated that when he woke up, his eyelids were sticking to his eyeballs. His tongue was sticking to the top of his mouth. That's how severely dehydrated he was due to the lack of water.

In a separate interview with Leftvoice.org, Villalobos said her husband described the prison's cells as having been flooded during the storm and claimed to have an email from another inmate's spouse that said two prisoners had already died due to the post-storm conditions. And this week, the site Truthout published a cache of alarming emails they claimed come from Beaumont inmates describing similar conditions at the prison

None of Villalobos' claims, or those made in the Truthout emails, have been officially corroborated.

An August 31 release from the Federal Bureau of Prisons said, "There was some flooding in and around areas of the FCC where inmates are not being housed, however, today the water has begun to recede. All inmates remain safe in their housing units." It went on to say there was "an adequate food and water supply for both inmates and staff."

This discrepancy between the bureau's assessment and the alarming conditions described by Beaumont inmates prompted Doggett's inquiry.

"The conditions being reported from the Beaumont prisons are unacceptable," Natalia Cornelio, the Criminal Justice Reform Director with the Texas Civil Rights Project, explained in a press release announcing the congressman's inquiry. "There are accounts of overflowing toilets, of people being forced to defecate in bags, of insufficient water and food, and of people being kept in prison past the completion of their calculated sentences. This is contrary to law, and to basic standards of human decency."

Texas Gov. Abbott: State May Seek More Than \$50B In Housing Aid After Harvey

By Associated Press

[TPMNews](#)

September 14, 2017

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Gov. Greg Abbott says Texas expects to seek more than \$50 billion in federal housing funding after Hurricane Harvey.

Abbott said at a news conference Thursday that those displaced by the storm can seek help via community development grants covering long-term housing needs as well as temporary costs while waiting for their homes to be repaired.

The governor said he's been told by the White House and members of Congress that as many as three more federal aid packages for Harvey victims may be approved before the end of the year. Congress already passed \$15.3 billion for initial Harvey recovery.

Abbott said nearly 4,000 Texas homes and other facilities still don't have power after Harvey, which killed more than 70 people. Fifty-two schools statewide suffered "catastrophic damage" and can't reopen.

Governor Abbott suspends Corpus Christi's budget, property tax rate deadline

[KIII TV](#)

By Jonathan Munson, KIII

September 15, 2017

CORPUS CHRISTI (KIII NEWS) - Governor Greg Abbott issued a proclamation Thursday to suspend the deadline for the City of Corpus Christi to adopt a budget and property tax rate.

The City Council approved Tuesday on first reading a two-cent increase in the tax rate in order to raise money to fix the streets. Under Texas law, the City has until Sept. 30 to adopt a budget and property tax rate, and requires that three public meeting be held beforehand so the public can have input.

The governor's proclamation will suspend that Sept. 30 deadline so that those still dealing with Hurricane Harvey's aftermath can still have a chance to participate in those public meetings.

"Every Texan deserves a voice on matters that affect their lives, and I will not let this disaster diminish such an important right," Abbott said. "This proclamation will allow the City of Corpus Christi to continue its focus on the recovery effort while still allowing taxpayers to participate in, and provide input on, important matters of local government business."

Abbott said he will grant similar proclamations for other cities and localities affected by Harvey as the requests come in.

Also Thursday, Abbott joined Commissioner John Sharp and other state and federal officials in Austin for a briefing and press conference on Hurricane Harvey recovery efforts.

You can watch the entire press conference here:

WORKSHOPS & MEETINGS

Medical conference will discuss response to Hurricane Harvey

By Jessica Faith

[KLTV-7](#)

September 14, 2017

TEXAS - The Texas Medical Association will have a conference to reflect on the medical response to Hurricane Harvey's devastation in Texas.

The Texas Medical Association is the largest state medical society in the nation, with over 50,000 physician and medical student members.

According to the TMA's press release, one of the objectives of the conference is to discuss "a new fund to help Harvey-destroyed physician practices rebuild."

The conference will be at the Hyatt Lost Pines Resort in Cedar Creek on September 16. It will begin at 7:30 a.m. with the discussion of telemedicine and digital health, and end at 11:45 a.m. with state legislative updates.

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

U.S. Small Business Admin sets up recovery center for SE Texas businesses at Lamar University

[12News](#)

September 14, 2017 ... *SBA was made aware of the incorrect date, which is highlighted below.*

BEAUMONT - The U.S. Small Business Administration has opened an SBA Business Recovery Center at Lamar University to help businesses in Southeast Texas.

The center will open Friday morning, Sept 18, at 8 a.m.

Lamar University
Center for Innovation, Commercialization and Entrepreneurship (CICE)
5091 Rolfe Christopher Drive
Beaumont, TX 77705
Opens 8 a.m. Friday, Sept. 15
Mondays - Friday 8 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Business advisors at the center will provide business assistance to clients on a wide variety of matters designed to help small business owners re-establish their operations, overcome the effects of the disaster and plan for their future according to a release from the SBA.

Services include assessing business economic injury, evaluating the business's strength, cash flow projections and most importantly, a review of options with the business owner to help them evaluate their alternatives and make decisions that are appropriate for their situation the release said.

The deadline to apply for property damage is Oct. 24, 2017. The deadline to apply for economic injury is May 25, 2018.

From the U.S. Small Business Administration...

The U.S. Small Business Administration and the Texas Gulf Coast Small Business Development Center Network today announced the opening of SBA Business Recovery Centers in Beaumont and Missouri City on Friday, Sept. 15 to provide a wide range of services to businesses impacted by Hurricane Harvey. The centers will open as indicated below.

"Due to the severe property damage and economic losses Hurricane Harvey inflicted on businesses in Texas, we want to provide every available service to help get them back on their feet," said SBA's Houston District Director Tim Jeffcoat. "The centers will provide a one-stop location for businesses to access a variety of specialized help. SBA customer service representatives and SBDC business advisors will be available to meet individually with each business owner," he added. No appointment is necessary. All services are provided free of charge.

JEFFERSON COUNTY

Lamar University

Center for Innovation, Commercialization and Entrepreneurship (CICE)

5091 Rolfe Christopher Drive

Beaumont, TX 77705

Opens 8 a.m. Friday, Sept. 15

Mondays - Fridays, 8 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Saturdays - Sundays, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

"SBA customer service representatives will meet with each business owner to explain how an SBA disaster loan can help finance their recovery. They will answer questions about SBA's disaster loan program, explain the application process and help each business owner complete their electronic loan application," Jeffcoat said.

According to Texas Gulf Coast SBDC Network Executive Director Dr. Steve Lawrence, SBDC business advisors at the center will provide business assistance to clients on a wide variety of matters designed to help small business owners re-establish their operations, overcome the effects of the disaster and plan for their future. Services include assessing business economic injury, evaluating the business's strength, cash flow projections and most importantly, a review of options with the business owner to help them evaluate their alternatives and make decisions that are appropriate for their situation.

"In addition, customer service representatives and SBDC advisors continue to be available at the following Business Recovery Centers to provide information on SBA disaster loans and business assistance," Jeffcoat continued.

According to Jeffcoat, businesses of any size and private, nonprofit organizations may borrow up to \$2 million to repair or replace damaged or destroyed real estate, machinery and equipment, inventory, and other business assets. These loans cover losses that are not fully covered by insurance or other recoveries.

For small businesses, small agricultural cooperatives, small businesses engaged in aquaculture, and most private, nonprofit organizations of any size, SBA offers Economic Injury Disaster Loans to help meet working capital needs caused by the disaster. Economic Injury Disaster Loan assistance is available regardless of whether the business suffered any property damage.

For business owners who are unable to visit the business recovery center, they may apply online using SBA's secure

website at <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela>.

SBA representatives also continue to meet with business owners and residents at disaster recovery centers located throughout the impacted area. For a list of locations, or to receive additional disaster assistance information, visit SBA's website at www.sba.gov/disaster. Applicants may also call SBA's Customer Service Center at (800) 659-2955 or email disastercustomerservice@sba.gov for more information. Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing may call (800) 877-8339. Completed applications should be mailed to U.S. Small Business Administration, Processing and Disbursement Center, 14925 Kingsport Road, Fort Worth, TX 76155.

The deadline to apply for property damage is Oct. 24, 2017. The deadline to apply for economic injury is May 25, 2018.

Unemployment aid coming too slowly to help people forced from work by Harvey

By Lydia DePillis |

[Houston Chronicle](#)

September 15, 2017

The eviction notice showed up on Steven Calhoun's door on September 6.

He wanted to pay his rent, but he couldn't after losing five days of work as prep cook and a week's pay because of Hurricane Harvey. His best hope was disaster unemployment assistance, a program to help people who temporarily lose work as the result of natural disaster, but more than two weeks after he filed a claim with the Texas Workforce Commission, he's still waiting.

"What am I gonna do?" thought Calhoun, 31, who moved to Houston from Milwaukee earlier this year. "This is the first time this has ever happened to me."

Calhoun is among an estimated 125,000 workers displaced by Hurricane Harvey who have filed for unemployment assistance provided as part of federal disaster relief — most, if not all of whom are still waiting for help. The Texas Workforce Commission, unprepared for the deluge of claims, said it doesn't know how many claims, if any, have been paid yet.

Unions and social service organizations helping workers apply for disaster unemployment assistance say it can take hours to make it through the process when applying by phone, since the TWC's lines are clogged with callers.

"People haven't been able to get through the system, and that in itself is a huge problem," says Josephine Lee, an organizer with El Pueblo Primero, a program based at San Pablo Episcopal Church in Southeast Houston that serves mostly Latino immigrants.

In order to address the demand, the Workforce Commission said it is hiring 80 more people to process phone calls and has extended its service hours to 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Governor Greg Abbott on Wednesday also waived the waiting period for benefits, which usually delays payment for the first week of a worker's unemployment.

"Our agency has been working diligently to respond to the needs of those who have lost their livelihoods and much more in some cases," said Lisa Givens, a spokeswoman for the Workforce Commission.

But for workers like Calhoun who live on thin margins, those checks often don't come through quickly enough to save them from financial hardship. Calhoun earns \$10 an hour working for OTG, a New York food service contractor at Bush Intercontinental airport.

While at home in the first few days after the storm, Calhoun applied for benefits online, hoping for a turnaround before his apartment complex's grace period was up. (Reached by phone, an assistant manager for the Sedona Pointe apartments said they would not be evicting people impacted by the storm this month, but Calhoun says that's not what he was told.)

Days went by, and no help came. Calhoun applied for every other source of aid he could think of, from FEMA to the

Red Cross, but they were all reserved for people whose homes were damaged, and the unemployment assistance claim kept showing up as pending. Calhoun tried to stay calm, knowing that stress could trigger his epilepsy.

"How is this fair to us?" Calhoun says. "How is this fair to anybody here who's been affected?"

Navigating the unemployment insurance system can be difficult even under normal circumstances, when Texas receives 30,000 or 40,000 claims a month. Texas pays only 79 percent of its claims within 14 days, which is below the federal standard of 87 percent, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

Hany Khalil, executive director of the Texas Gulf Coast Labor Federation, said he'd like to see the process streamlined and the deadline for applying — which is now Sept. 29 — extended to accommodate those who'd had trouble getting through.

"The response of Houston during the hurricane was one of enormous generosity," says Khalil. "We didn't ask, 'do you really need help to get out of this flooded zone?' Our government needs that same spirit."

The left-leaning National Employment Law Project has also advocated for benefit levels to be raised for the disaster-assistance program and eligibility requirements to be relaxed. Representatives of the labor union UNITE-HERE, which represents about 1,500 workers at Bush Airport, say that about half the claims that they helped people file were rejected, usually because workers hadn't worked enough in the previous year to qualify for benefits.

Many employers just pay their workers for the hours they missed due to the hurricane, which saves them the stress of having to deal with the state system at all. Employees at United Airlines, for example, had no interruption to their paychecks.

Some small businesses, of course, can't afford to make payroll for hours that weren't worked if money wasn't coming in. Large ones, though, can typically shell out wages for at least a few days.

On Wednesday, after being contacted by a reporter, OTG said it would be paying all its workers for lost time during the hurricane. Employees were then notified that the extra money would be included in their next paychecks, at the end of the week. "No crewmember will lose a dime in their paycheck because of Hurricane Harvey," said Eric Brinker, the company's vice president for experience.

But for Calhoun, it wasn't soon enough. On Thursday, he took out a \$1,000 auto title loan in order to pay his rent before the landlord added on any more fees. After that, other bills await.

"There's a lot of people in this situation," Calhoun says. "They're trying their best to hold it together."

Jobless claims fell 14,000 last week

[News-Journal](#)

September 14, 2017

WASHINGTON — The number of people seeking unemployment benefits declined slightly last week but still remained elevated as hurricane disruptions impacted layoffs for a second week.

Applications for jobless benefits dropped by 14,000 to a seasonally adjusted 284,000 last week after surging to 298,000 the previous week, the Labor Department reported Thursday. The previous week's increase of 62,000 had pushed claims to the highest level in two years.

The less volatile four-week average for claims rose to 263,250 last week, the highest level in a year.

Applications from Texas, recovering from Hurricane Harvey, totaled 51,988 last week, down by 11,800 from the previous week, but still far above the typical range of about 12,000 applications filed weekly in Texas.

Gas prices finally going back down after post-Harvey spike

By Rachael Cardin

[WTKR](#)

September 15, 2017

HAMPTON ROADS, Va. - Good news for families who plan to travel this weekend; gas prices are on the decline!

After Hurricane Harvey hit the Gulf Coast, the nation saw a major spike. But now that oil refineries are back online, the prices are going down.

Now, it might only be a few cents lower than yesterday or last week, but the downward trend is a good sign. According to AAA, a \$.15 to \$.25 spike was anticipated but many states actually saw a \$.30-\$.40 increase instead.

According to the gas calculator on the AAA website, the average price for a gallon of regular gas here in the Commonwealth is \$2.51. That's only 2 cents lower than last week, but at least it's less.

Hurricane Harvey took 19% of the nation's oil refineries offline, but those workers have headed back to work and now the oil and gas should start moving from state to state.

AAA said it could be awhile before we see prices drop closer to \$2.00 a gallon but the EPA did allow refineries to start making winter blend after Harvey. Winter blend is less expensive to refine than summer blend so the early switch to winter blend could also help your wallet.

Right now oil companies said they are trying to make up for lost time, refining as pushing out as much as product as possible to reap the profits.

Back to Business for Some Hotels after Hurricanes Irma, Harvey

[Hotel Business](#)

September 15, 2017

INTERNATIONAL REPORT—it's not business as usual for many hoteliers left smarting from the catastrophic damage left in the wakes of Hurricanes Irma and Harvey. Here's an update on where some properties stand.

Look for the Helpers

Less than two weeks after Hurricane Harvey had devastated parts of southeast Texas, John Ferguson, founder of Ferguson Development in Liberty, MO, called his friend and business partner, Lew Wiens, chairman and CEO of True North Hotel Group in Overland Park, KS, and said, "Let's do this." And from there, the ball started rolling. In just four days, Ferguson's idea to send essential items for Harvey flood victims in the Houston area snowballed into a joint effort between the two partners that also included Ferguson Hotel Development, True North Hotel Group, Kansas City's Gary Crossley Ford, BRR Architects, Teamsters Local #56 in Kansas City and Teamsters Local #120 in Minneapolis.

The result was a gift of two 18-wheelers delivered to a Houston warehouse on Sept. 13 by four Teamsters who drove the trucks from Minneapolis and Kansas City. The items will be distributed to Harvey victims through the Salvation Army. "Harvey victims didn't ask for this. We're all Americans, and I would hope someone would do this for me," said Ferguson.

The Westin Jekyll Island, a property managed by New Castle Hotels and Resorts, remained opened for state police and the National Guard as the island was evacuated. The property lost power but operated with generators and the hotel's chef prepared three meals a day for the people who remained. Some staff stayed at the hotel with their families.

"We knew we were going to have a few associates staying at the hotel, so extending hospitality to first responders and emergency personnel was an easy decision to make," said Kevin Runner, GM, Westin Jekyll Island. "It helps

our small community get on its feet more quickly, and it's the right thing to do. Everyone feels helpless in these situations, so we're glad that we were able to contribute something to the effort."

The Palm Beach Post reported that amid Hurricane Irma, friendships were formed among guests and staff in Jupiter, FL. In addition, there have been acts of generosity and heroism. Marriott International chartered a ship from the Dominican Republic and coordinated with layers of authorities for permission for the ship to land and evacuate as many guests as possible, according to Forbes. And a Best Western Plus in Lewisville, TX donated nearly every piece of furniture it had.

Hotels Reopen, Assess Impact

An update from Ashford Hospitality Trust Inc. revealed that after preliminary inspections, the company's hotels in the path of Hurricane Irma did not sustain any significant damage with a few properties sustaining minor damage. All of the company's properties are open and operating. The affected hotels in Florida represented approximately 13% of the firm's year-to-date hotel EBITDA through the second quarter, according to the REIT.

"Our hearts go out to the families and communities that have been impacted by Hurricane Irma and we remain supportive in the recovery effort," said Douglas A. Kessler, Ashford Trust's president and CEO. "We believe our proactive asset management and the efforts of our hotel property managers enabled us to keep all hotels operational, mitigate damage, and position affected hotels for remediation work."

Ashford Trust continues to assess the full impact of the damage caused by Hurricane Irma, and all of its properties have comprehensive property, casualty, flood and business interruption insurance, subject to a maximum \$10-million deductible. The company believes no damage will exceed coverage caps, and will provide additional updates in the event of any material changes.

Xenia Hotels & Resorts Inc. has shared that its hotels in Orlando, FL, Atlanta and Savannah, GA, Birmingham, AL, and Charleston, SC, did not experience any significant property damage as a result of Hurricane Irma. Each of the company's eight hotels in these markets is currently open and operating.

The 120-room Hyatt Centric Key West Resort & Spa located in Key West, FL, is currently closed. The resort's employees and guests were evacuated in advance of Hurricane Irma making landfall, according to Xenia. The company is currently unable to provide further updates regarding the property's physical condition or when it is expected to reopen, as it will be performing a complete assessment as soon as circumstances allow. Xenia's corporate office located in Orlando, FL, did not sustain any significant damage and is fully operational.

As it relates to Hurricane Harvey in Texas, further inspections of the company's Houston and Austin hotels confirmed that none of the hotels experienced significant property damage, and all four hotels in these markets are open and operating.

"Our thoughts continue to be with the people in all locations impacted by these two destructive storms," said Marcel Verbaas, president and CEO of Xenia. "We are very proud of the efforts the hotels have put forth to cater to the needs of guests and associates, as well as to the communities in which they are located."

Major hotel brands are continuing to monitor the impact of the hurricanes on properties in the impacted areas. Marriott International's management teams are evaluating the status of the hotels and working closely with local authorities as needed.

"We express our appreciation for the efforts of local police, emergency responders and other officials in supporting the community," said a brand spokesperson. "To date, there have been no reports of storm-related injuries to employees or guests at our hotels. While most of our hotels are open, some hotels in the affected areas have sustained damage. Efforts are underway to fully restore operations but some hotels may have temporary interruption or limited availability of guest services."

Hotels Reopen in the Caribbean

According to the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism and Aviation, the majority of hotels and resorts throughout the

islands of the Bahamas are operating as usual or are expected to reopen on their regularly scheduled dates.

Hotels on Nassau and Paradise Island were not damaged. Atlantis, Paradise Island, Baha Mar Resort and Casino, Breezes Bahamas, Melia Nassau Beach Resort, One&Only Ocean Club and Warwick Paradise Island are among the hotels open and hosting guests. Also, Grand Bahama hotels are expected to reopen today, including Grand Lucayan, Pelican Bay Hotel and Viva Wyndham Fortuna Beach.

A detailed report released by New York-based Ovation Vacations shows the travel firm has about \$18 million in displaced business mostly from St. Barts and Anguilla.

“The good news is that most of the Caribbean came out of Irma unscathed,” said Jack S. Ezon, president, Ovation Vacations. “We have placed nearly \$1 million this week in business to alternative Caribbean destinations such as Cayman, Dominican Republic, Bahamas, St. Lucia, Turks & Caicos and others.”

Ezon is advising clients to wait until the end of this week to see where things fall after further investigation. “Indeed, as you know the situation is still very raw with so many of our dear friends without water or electricity,” he said. “Some of the philanthropic efforts we have heard are heartwarming, and we are working on our own philanthropic investigation, as so many people want to help but unsure how.”

HUMAN INTEREST & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Give Donations for Hurricane Harvey Relief, Get a Taco

[The Current](#)

September 15, 2017

Yep, you read that right.

The Boys and Girls Clubs of San Antonio are teaming up with Taco Bell and UTSA to help victims of Hurricane Harvey and are asking the community to get involved.

As if you didn't need more of an incentive to help out fellow Texans in need, your good deed will be rewarded with a free crunchy taco and discounted UTSA football tickets. The ticket voucher is only guaranteed for the first 750 people who donate.

All you have to do is bring snacks, school supplies or cold hard cash (at least \$5) to Alamodome North Plaza on Saturday between 2:30 and 6 p.m. BGCSA is specifically asking for packaged snacks, hygiene items, notebooks, pencils, crayons, markers, glue and erasers.

The proceeds will go toward the Boys and Girls Clubs in San Antonio as well as the greater Houston area.

Airbnb offers hundreds of rooms to hurricane evacuees

By Dara Kerr

<https://www.cnet.com/news/irma-harvey-airbnb-offers-up-hundreds-of-rooms-to-hurricane-refugees/>

September 14, 2017

Airbnb has something tangible it can offer people struck by disaster: homes.

The home rental company has urged people who use its platform to offer rooms and entire houses to relief workers and displaced people from hurricanes Harvey and Irma. If hosts waive their nightly fees, so does Airbnb.

So far, more than 1,000 free places to stay have been listed in Texas after Hurricane Harvey hit. And in Florida, more than 230 free listings have been posted on Airbnb since Hurricane Irma swept through the state over the weekend. Airbnb expects the number of listings in Florida to rise once infrastructure, like electricity and running water, come back online.

Proffering free places to stay is part of Airbnb's Disaster Response Program, which locates local temporary housing for people in need. While Airbnb typically aims to make a profit off its home rentals, the company is increasingly offering free services in certain situations. It also has a staffed team dedicated to supporting its disaster relief efforts.

"This is a program that we've been running the last few years and it's within our DNA at Airbnb," Kellie Bentz, Airbnb's head of global disaster response and relief, said during a conference call with reporters. "Our community of hosts are extremely generous."

Airbnb initially created its disaster response tool in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, which left more than 100,000 people homeless in the New York City area in 2012. And more recently, the home rental company offered places to stay to immigrants who were stranded by President Donald Trump's travel ban and after the deadly attack in Barcelona. To date, the program has been "activated" in more than 90 disasters worldwide.

The way the disaster response tool works is Airbnb contacts people in the area asking if they have a room or couch they'd like to offer for free. If Airbnb gets takers, they can list their space on the company's disaster response portal. Those in need can find places to stay on this same portal.

In the case of Hurricane Irma, people stranded can find free Airbnb rooms across Florida, Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina and North Carolina. This program started on Sept. 7 and will go through Sept. 28.

Houston congregations rally around members, neighbors displaced by Harvey

[UUWorld](#)

September 15, 2017

Unitarian Universalists continue to donate funds to help people and communities affected by two major hurricanes, as cleanup begins in Florida after Hurricane Irma, which struck on September 10, and continues in Texas in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, which hit August 25.

As of September 14, the Hurricane Harvey Recovery Fund set up by the Unitarian Universalist Association and the UU Service Committee on August 29 had raised \$237,058 from 2,029 donors, including seven congregations. Other congregational gifts are still being processed, according to the UUA's Stewardship and Development staff. Half of the funds raised will go to at-risk populations served by grassroots partners of the UUSC, including those who work with undocumented immigrants. The other half will support UU congregations and members of those congregations most affected by the storm. During the month of September, 20 percent of all sales from the Beacon Press website will go to the UUA-UUSC fund.

The UUA has also set up a Hurricane Irma Recovery Fund to assist congregations in repairing any damage and to respond to the needs of members and their larger communities as they recover from the most powerful Atlantic hurricane ever recorded. (UU World is reporting separately on the aftermath of Hurricane Irma.)

In Texas, congregational leaders are still estimating the cost of repairs to congregational properties. And they are still finding out how many UUs were significantly affected by Hurricane Harvey and subsequent flooding.

In Houston, Emerson UU Church sustained damage to a new roof, "but it seems pretty inconsequential in light of everything else," said the Rev. Becky Edmiston-Lange. About a third of the congregation's approximately 400 members had to evacuate from their homes due to flooding. Among them is a family who relocated to Houston after losing their home and everything in it during Hurricane Katrina in 2005 in New Orleans. "They'll probably be able to redeem their home, but it's reawakening a lot of trauma," said Edmiston-Lange. She added that for members without a lot of resources, the UUA/UUSC Harvey Relief Fund will be a lifeline.

"Those who have not been affected are working very, very hard to help those who are," she said. "It's really, really impressive how folks have rallied around." The congregation will also be reaching out to vulnerable communities affected by the hurricane and flooding, she said.

Bay Area UU Church, about 25 miles southeast of Houston, is in a neighborhood where many homes sustained

serious damage from flooding. But the church itself is fine besides a small roof leak, said the Rev. Bruce Beisner. At least seventeen families in the congregation, which has about 220 members, experienced flood damage in their homes, he said. The congregation has been collecting donations for area shelters, and raised \$8,400 for the Harvey Relief Fund during a worship service on September 3, he said.

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston, which has three campuses throughout the city and is developing a fourth, has set up a hurricane relief fund to repair storm damage at its Museum District campus. "More importantly," said the Rev. Dr. Daniel O'Connell, senior minister, the fund will "help give immediate and direct aid to those in need." The church is also working to match volunteers with people who need help with hurricane recovery.

The church's campuses in the Copperfield and Stafford neighborhoods, along with its future Richmond campus property, did not experience significant damage, he said. However, the Museum District campus sustained significant water damage through roof leaks. It appears that the second-floor roof over the library will have to be replaced at a cost of about \$10,000, O'Connell said, and carpet on the third floor also needs to be replaced. Although the building was insured it appears the insurance policy will not cover all the damage, he said.

During worship September 3, the congregation raised \$11,000 for its recovery fund. O'Connell said he expects to raise another \$10,000 to \$15,000 for three organizations with which it works: the Emergency Aid Coalition; EAC's partner organization, the Houston Food Bank; and Montrose Grace Place, which offers a safe environment for vulnerable homeless youth of all sexualities and genders. The congregation's shared offering partner for an upcoming series of worship services on compassion is Rebuilding Together Houston, which helps repair homes at no cost for low-income elderly homeowners. "We have a bunch of folks who regularly volunteer for their projects," said O'Connell, and the organization's services "will be more in demand than ever."

Beaumont family who escaped Harvey to Waco struck by second tragedy

[WWLTV](#)

September 15, 2017

WACO - One month after Hurricane Harvey, tragedy has struck a father and his daughters for the second time.

Days after checking into a Waco Hotel to escape the storm, Joseph Ardoin's wife suddenly died – leaving him with little money and five girls to raise.

Lashundrea Lemon loved Waco so much. Lemon and her family were planning to move there soon from Beaumont which is why Waco was where they fled to when Hurricane Harvey hit. However, in just days she started feeling sick. She was rushed to the ER and never returned to her family.

Despite their smiling faces, these five sisters aged one, three, four, six and 10 have been through a lot.

"We have to go back and undo everything she did, everything, getting the kids back to school. It's hard,"

Hurricane Harvey took away their home and everything they had. They checked into Home2 Suites and four days later their 28-year-old mother Lashundrea suddenly stopped breathing. She was rushed to the hospital and died leaving there father Joseph - to raise them alone.

"My daughter-in-law didn't make it," Ardoin's mother Sarah said. "My son is left with five girls, five of them. There's so much a mother can do. I can't fix it this time."

From changing diapers to combing hair, Joseph's mom and sister have stepped up to help. The two oldest girls have enrolled in Waco ISD but are in dire need of shoes and clothes.

Ardoin is also in need, he is looking for work and a place for the family to stay.

Bubbas 33 in Waco said they are holding a fundraiser to get them on their feet.

“To see those girls and them here in the community of Waco. I think it’s a good idea for us as a business and a community to reach out and welcome them into our community,” Phillip Dunn with Bubba’s 33 said.

For now, the family’s focus is being there for the five little girls.

“We’re going to have to continue to show them that your mom love you and we love you too and I’m here for you,” Aunt Isis Booker said.

There is still no cause of death for Lashaundra. Her family said she had no health issues. Bubba’s 33 will be hosting its fundraiser on September 26. On September 30, Waco River Safari will also have a fundraiser for the family.

Right now, the family is working to get Lashaundra’s body back to Beaumont and pay for the funeral.

Anyone wanting to drop off donations can take them to Home2 Suites in Waco.

Address: 2500 Bagby Ave, Waco, TX 76706

Seguin HS band to play for Harvey-battered Rockport-Fulton football team

By Garrett Brnger

[KSAT](#)

September 14, 2017

SEGUIN, Texas - When the Mighty Matador band takes the stands Friday night, it won't be playing for Seguin.

Instead, the high school band members have volunteered to back the Rockport-Fulton football team when it plays Leander's Glenn High School in a neutral-ground matchup at Seguin. With Rockport's world turned upside-down by Hurricane Harvey, the band members want to set at least one part of that world right.

"I can't go out there and help in the actual affected area," said Sheldon Scholl, a brass captain in the Seguin High School band. "And this is the best thing I can do, is help the band play for Rockport."

Rockport, a small city near Corpus Christi, was slammed by Harvey when it made landfall as a Category 4 hurricane. While the football team has continued to play, SHS band director Stan Mauldin said the 80 members of Rockport-Fulton's band are either at a nearby school district or spread as far north as Dallas.

"Those kids may or may not move back home again, and so that band is going to change for quite a while," he said.

The matchup between the two, out-of-town football teams predated Harvey, but the idea to play for Rockport-Fulton started with a conversation at a booster club meeting.

"Basically, one of the booster parents said, 'wouldn't it be neat if we could just play the fight song and the school song for them?'" Mauldin said.

The idea of helping out hit the right note for the band members, and Mauldin said he expects 180 to 190 of the 213 band members show up Friday.

Practicing the fight and school songs for the first time Thursday, band members said volunteering to play was the right thing to do.

"There's a lot of people that have nothing," drum Major Chloe Luna said. "And I want to be able to say I made their life normal for even a few minutes."

Mauldin said the band boosters are also raising money for Rockport-Fulton's band program to help with the loss of sheet music, uniforms and instruments. They hope to collect \$5,000 in all.

Local benefit concert helps Hurricane Harvey victims

[KKCO](#)

September 15, 2017

GRAND JUNCTION, Colo. (KKCO/KJCT) The Grand Junction community is coming together to help Houston, as they recover from Hurricane Harvey.

A benefit concert on Thursday night in downtown Grand Junction provided funding for people suffering in Houston following Harvey's destruction.

While there wasn't a fee, organizers asked those who came to leave at least leave a \$5 donation. Those who couldn't make a monetary donation were asked to leave blankets or clothes.

"I've never experienced a hurricane, but I couldn't imagine how bad that is, and unfortunate," said organizer Christopher Teal. "It just is really sad and I thought why not, I have means and have capabilities, I know people and I know we can manage it."

All of the proceeds from the concert will go directly to the American Red Cross.

Organizers said they'll have another benefit for people in Florida who were hit by Hurricane Irma depending on the success of the benefit for Texas.

Hurricane Harvey Charity Concert at Love & War in Texas

[Plano Magazine](#)

September 15, 2017

Join us for three great music acts featuring Eleven Hundred Springs. Shiner's own Brew Master Jimmy will host the event with an opportunity to meet and greet. Most importantly will we be raising money for the Port Aransas Hurricane Harvey Community Relief!

Live Texas music has become a tradition at L&W. Texas singers and songwriters from around the state are finding their way to what is quickly becoming a central gathering place for Texas music and Musicians.

Come join us for Texas food, fun and music and you'll know why Texas is known as the friendship state.

"We're going to make it personal," Edmond students learning about Hurricane Harvey by helping victims

By Lacey Lett

[News4Oklahoma](#)

September 15, 2017

EDMOND, Okla. - Pens, notebooks and gift cards fill a classroom at Heartland Middle School, but none of the supplies will be used by Oklahoma students.

Instead, students at Central Middle, Cheyenne Middle and Heartland Middle School have been gathering as many supplies as they can to help hurricane victims.

It all started when the seventh-grade principal at Heartland Middle School read an article from a Dallas newspaper regarding a supply drive for a Houston school.

When Hurricane Harvey hit Texas, it devastated the families and staff members of Cunningham Middle School in Houston.

"A third of their students have lost everything, and she has a couple of her staff too, her secretary and a first-grade

teacher have also lost everything in the hurricane," Gabe Schmidt, seventh grade principal at Heartland Middle School, said.

After learning about the issues facing Cunningham Middle School, Schmidt decided to start a donation drive at the three Edmond schools.

"We just want to make sure they're safe and that they have supplies and that they are not in this alone," Cameron Woodard, an eighth grader at Heartland Middle School, said.

The materials will go far, and the helpers from the heartland are learning in the process.

"For them to be able to give to that same age, that same population that they know they need school supplies. They know they need support from gift cards. It's a uniform school," Michelle Grinsteiner, principal at Cheyenne Middle School, said.

"If it was happening to us, we would want them to do that because I mean we have tornadoes in Oklahoma. They have hurricanes so it's kind of if there's devastation here, then I think that would help," Bri Johnson, a student at Heartland Middle School, said.

These schools plan to continue to help for as long as they need.

"We're going to make it personal and have that personal touch so that we have a relationship with someone not necessarily next door to us but our sister school to the south," Schmidt said.

They will be accepting donations until Wednesday.

Local family stranded at Houston hospital has made it out of area

By Breaking News Staff, Caryn Golden

[WhoioTV](#)

September 15, 2017

The Myers family from Versailles, previously trapped in Houston, Texas at Texas Children's Hospital by the rising waters, is now on their way home to Ohio.

The family had been there for multiple surgeries for their 9-year-old son Aiden. They arrived August 8 for evaluation and had two surgeries, the last one last Friday — then the storm hit.

After being released from the hospital, Houston residents directed the family to two open roads out of the area.

Hurricane Harvey made landfall just as Aiden Myers underwent neurosurgery at Texas Children's Hospital in Houston.

Myers has a rare genetic disease called Tuberous Sclerosis Complex or TSC, which causes tumors to grow in many of his organs.

Aiden's brain tumors were causing him "catastrophic seizures," according to his mother Danielle Myers

The surgery to possibly end them had them make the long drive to Texas Children's Hospital in Houston before the storm hit.

"Friday as the hurricane was making landfall, Dr. (Howard) Weiner performed surgery on Aiden, removed a couple of the tumors from the frontal lobe of his brain to finally control his seizures," said Myers.

"At that time, Houston wasn't really getting hit that hard. It was raining but no flooding," added Myers.

"Dr. Weiner did get here Saturday morning to check on Aiden, and Saturday night we went to bed and woke up the

next morning, it was flooded. The roads out here are impassable," Myers said.

The Myers' have three other young children at home in Versailles that started school this week.

But it's not their family they were worried about. "We are not struggling with the flood, our hearts are with the people, the staff taking care of us here at Texas Children's. They may not have a home to go to, we do in Ohio."

She asked Ohioans to show Texans their support. "If there is anyone in Ohio that can supply food, clothing, supplies, please do that, they need it down here," said Myers.

She described the images she saw in Houston, and the view out her son's hospital window.

Comanche County to provide hurricane relief

By Haley Wilson

[KSWO](#)

September 14, 2017

LAWTON, OK (KSWO) - Comanche County Emergency Management is teaming up with local volunteer firefighters, businesses, the city of Lawton and Walmart to host a drive to collect donations for hurricane Harvey victims this Saturday.

They decided to have this drive when residents started asking where they could donate to hurricane Harvey victims.

Deputy Director at Comanche County Emergency Management Chloe Lewis said this is an opportunity to pay it forward after receiving help here in Oklahoma from others after floods and other natural disasters.

"It's just a really long process and they sit there years later and realize that they don't have pictures of family members that ended up in there so it's a constant reminder throughout the rest of their life that oh yeah that was in the flood so it's a really hard time for them."

Sherely Grubbs with the City of Lawton said one thing people sometimes forget is that the hurricane hitting is just the beginning for the Hurricane Harvey victims. Some are still staying in shelters unable to get back to their homes.

"Their lives aren't going to be normal or what they want them to be for a long time and so it's kinda impactful to kind of watch the beginning of devastation. For us, we kinda go back to normal so quickly but for them, this is going to be a long time coming."

That is why multiple agencies in Comanche County are working together trying to collect supplies to help those whose lives are forever changed.

"I'm hoping that people down there can see that there is a whole country that cares about them and it's not just their problem."

If you'd like to donate they'll have semi-trailers located at Walmart on Sheridan and Quanah Parker Trailway and at Cache Road Square from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturday. They're not taking donations after that because they're planning to send the items on Monday.

Local hurricane relief efforts show generosity of community

[The Republic](#)

September 15, 2017

When it comes to helping others, organizers don't have to beg Columbus residents and businesses to lend a hand. That's been proven true many times, and reiterated again since Hurricane Harvey hit Texas and Hurricane Irma landed in Florida.

Quickly, two local congregations — Asbury United Methodist Church and St. Peter's Lutheran Church — began putting together plans to help residents in southeast Texas. They were working through national relief organizations to determine where to provide help. Both churches are working to assemble teams of volunteers to travel to Houston to help with recovery efforts.

Likewise, county residents started working together to collect needed supplies and other items – also headed for Texas. Volunteer firefighter Shane Chandler organized a collection at the Clay Township Volunteer Fire Department Sept. 4 to 6 so donations could be routed to the nonprofit Houston Food Bank to distribute. Also, former Bartholomew County Coroner Larry Fisher organized a donation drive at Clifford Volunteer Fire Department on Sept. 9 to assist residents of three small Texas communities: Fannett, Hamshire and Winnie, all located southwest of Beaumont. That resulted in nearly a semi-trailer full of items to assist victims.

Depending on the severity of damage caused by Hurricane Irma, an additional relief effort could be conducted to help small towns in Florida, too, Fisher said.

When you've been impacted yourself, as Columbus residents were during the June 2008 flood, you know first-hand what victims are dealing with.

That experience of devastation and need for help sticks with people, and is motivation to help others in similar circumstances because you understand the benefit of a helping hand.

As a result, Bartholomew County residents have turned out in force to generously donate their time, money and supplies to help residents hundreds of miles away.

While donations of supplies to communities affected by natural disasters are helpful, monetary contributions are still incredibly important and can boost results. Here are some charities to consider to help victims of Hurricane Harvey in Texas:

- American Red Cross: Donate via the charity's website using a credit or debit card. Texting a \$10 donation is possible by sending a text to the number 90999 with the message "REDCROSS."
- Texas Diaper Bank
- Save the Children: It is setting up safe areas for children inside shelters, and distributing infant and toddler supplies.
- Portlight Strategies: It helps people with disabilities, older adults and their families recover after disasters.
- San Antonio Humane Society: It has set up an emergency fund for pets and strays
- Houston Humane Society

MISCELLANEOUS

Social Media Plays Growing Role in Guard's Hurricane Response

[DODBuzz](#)

September 14, 2017

As victims of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma pleaded to be rescued on popular social media apps such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, the National Guard altered its response accordingly.

"It's been a very dynamic and evolving environment," National Guard Bureau Chief Gen. Joseph Lengyel recently told Military.com. "This has certainly evolved how we do it."

Lengyel spoke with Military.com at the annual conference of the National Guard Association of the United States in Louisville, Ky.

While social media isn't the primary communications tool between the Guard and those at risk, it's starting to play a

larger role.

The Washington Post reported that during Harvey, a Guard Humvee vanished in Katy, Texas. With no other way to reach the driver, soldiers finally were able to communicate with him using SnapChat, a messaging app that can capture a photo or video, which is then relayed to the recipient briefly before it disappears.

Similar situations can happen when there is a communications capability gap in a disaster area, Lengyel said.

“Whenever you go into particular environments, communications is always difficult when you first start. Because the infrastructure [isn’t] there. It has to evolve,” he said.

For example, the Guard got the call to drive to Beaumont, Texas, before the Federal Emergency Management Agency or first responders could set up hub stations to house communications equipment.

Coordinating Efforts

The military has crews that monitor response efforts as they happen in real-time.

For example, its only non-offensive air operations center, known as “America’s AOC,” at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida, keeps track of relief no matter where it’s needed in the U.S.

Military.com visited the 601st AOC in March. It evaluates domestic operations, or DomOps, for Air Forces Northern, monitoring the airwaves — and social media sites — for events with potential military ties.

Lengyel said he was impressed with efforts as ongoing training rotations across the globe have not stopped despite the massive hurricane relief effort. Part of the Texas Guard deployed to the Horn of Africa even as Harvey laid waste to the Houston area and Hurricane Irma loomed.

Thousands of National Guard troops remain on the ground in Texas for relief efforts, and the Pentagon mobilized nearly 30,000 military personnel for Irma recovery.

That’s all thanks to planning.

“Every state creates and drafts an all-hazards response plan ... and a lot of it comes together from various federal agencies,” Lengyel said of the constant training and push to get ahead of the next big disaster, which could vary from an earthquake to a terrorist attack.

“Everybody has a plan. And we coordinate ... and we think about it before it happens, and we’ve gotten much better about this over the years,” he said.

Special Mission Unit Milestone

This year’s relief efforts — from Harvey and Irma to wildfires in the West — created another milestone for the U.S. military this year.

For the first time in the nearly 70-year history of the Air Force Reserve, all three special mission units — weather reconnaissance, firefighting and aerial spray — were called to action simultaneously, the service said this week.

Air Force Reserve Command’s 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron — better known as the Hurricane Hunters — out of Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi, “have been flying weather reconnaissance missions nonstop” since Aug. 17, the Air Force said in a release.

The 302nd Airlift Wing out of Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado, is assisting the National Interagency Fire Center by providing a Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System (MAFFS)-equipped C-130H Hercules, aircraft and aircrew to support ongoing aerial firefighting efforts in the western U.S.

And the 910th Airlift Wing, out of Youngstown Air Reserve Station, Ohio, is providing its aerial spray capability to

repel mosquitos and other pests in eastern Texas following Harvey.

Texas replica of Columbus ship sinks after Hurricane Harvey

By AP

[The Eagle](#)

September 14, 2017

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas (AP) — The last of three replica ships built by Spain to honor explorer Christopher Columbus and displayed in Texas has sunk after Hurricane Harvey.

KRIS-TV in Corpus Christi reported Thursday that officials with the Columbus Sailing Association, which owns the Nina (NEEN'-yuh), believe it's fixable. A GoFundMe page has been established.

Harvey last month slammed the Corpus Christi area. The Nina began taking on water, with much of the ship now submerged in Corpus Christi Bay.

Spain in the 1980s built replicas of the Nina, the Pinta and the Santa Maria to mark the 500th anniversary of the explorer's voyage. The vessels were permanently docked in Corpus Christi after a tour in the 1990s.

The Pinta and the Santa Maria, both made of pine, were demolished in 2014 after years of deterioration.

Harvey death toll put at 82: 'Mass casualties have absolutely not happened'

By Special To The Washington Post

[News-Journal](#)

September 15, 2017

AUSTIN — Texas officials said Thursday that they believe at least 82 people died as a result of Hurricane Harvey and the intense flooding it brought to Houston and coastal areas, although it could take weeks to determine the exact death toll.

The picture could have been much bleaker given the amount of flooding and that entire communities were cut off for days. Hospitals had to be evacuated as water rose into buildings that had never before flooded; some residents found themselves trapped in their homes while chest-deep floods took over their streets; and emergency responders along the Texas coast were overwhelmed, leading civilians with watercraft to rescue one another. Some worried that when floodwaters receded, the number of deaths would mount, but that didn't materialize.

"The mass casualties have absolutely not happened," John Hellerstedt, commissioner of the Texas Department of State Health Services, said in an interview Thursday.

In a typical week in Harris County, which encompasses Houston and its 2.3 million residents, there are about 4,300 deaths, Hellerstedt said. "The deaths that are attributable to this disaster is a very small portion," he said.

State officials said Texas was prepared for the worst when the hurricane slammed into the Gulf coast, and they said those preparations appear to have paid off. Gov. Greg Abbott said Thursday that crews continue to search house-by-house for victims but that "the risk to lives has now been reduced, if not completely eliminated."

Receding waters reveal how much work remains to be done to rebuild and repair, Abbott said. The first task is clearing the 200 million cubic yards of debris — enough to fill up the football stadium at Texas A&M University 125 times — left in Harvey's wake.

The American Red Cross reported that 5,258 people spent Wednesday night in 28 shelters strewn across the Texas coast, mostly in Houston and Harris County — down from more than 30,000 at the height of the flooding. The sheltered population is declining, officials said, as Texans relocate to other types of temporary housing. Some 21,000 households are living in 2,000 hotels in 33 states, according to Tony Robinson, the Federal Emergency

Management Association's regional director.

Some shelters also house pets, but the Texas Animal Health Commission has been housing the state's affected livestock. Thousands of animals — including 45 potbellied pigs, 985 horses, 563 cattle and 1,210 dogs and cats — remain in 92 independent shelters. Earlier this week, livestock stranded in water received 210,000 pounds of hay, delivered by the Texas Army National Guard.

Federal funds, including the \$15 billion disaster relief package passed by Congress last week, have been immediately allocated: Already last week, Houston and Harris County received \$91 million and \$44 million, respectively, to help pay for debris removal. Abbott said he expects federal lawmakers to pass more supplemental budgets to help Texas recover throughout the year.

The Red Cross has disbursed \$46.4 million to 116,000 people, according to the Texas Department of Public Safety. Robinson said 735,000 individuals have applied for FEMA assistance and the agency has doled out \$378 million in direct payments. Meanwhile, small-business and home-loan processors are working as quickly as possible.

"We are really looking at innovative solutions in housing, with the primary goal of getting people back into their homes as quickly and safely as possible," Robinson said.

Even now, though, two weeks after the eye of Harvey hit the Texas coast, some 3,900 homes and facilities remain without power, including many where meters — and the homes they were assigned to — "no longer exist," Abbott said. The state's water structures are improving, but 77 boil water notices remain in effect, 19 water systems are down and 31 wastewater systems remain offline.

Harvey's hit to Texas came just as students were heading back to school, and "the overwhelming majority of schools are back open in Texas," said Mike Morath, commissioner of the Texas Education Agency. Of the 964 campuses damaged in the storm, 52 suffered "catastrophic damage" and will take a significant amount of time to reopen, Morath said.

With mass casualties seemingly avoided, the state's health resources are now focused on fighting infections, both from bacteria in floodwaters and from mosquitoes. Hellerstedt said that 2.4 million acres have been sprayed for mosquitoes, and health officials dispatched to the affected region are armed with vaccines.

The disaster response is under the purview of Texas A&M University Chancellor John Sharp, whom Abbott appointed as "hurricane recovery czar," overseeing the Commission to Rebuild Texas.

BBB warns of fake FEMA calls to hurricane victims

[KFDM](#)

September 14, 2017

SOUTHEAST TEXAS — From BBB of Southeast Texas - BBB of SE TX is warning consumers that FEMA will not call you to award a "grant".

Consumers have contacted BBB SETX offices stating they just received a call from Washington DC (202 area code) and wanting to know if FEMA is working with Walmart to distribute government grants to hurricane victims in our area.

FEMA WILL NOT CALL YOU to award a grant.

Scammers are targeting our area and many of the consumers contacting our office stated the caller knew their name, age and address, which made it appear legitimate.

Many of the callers had recently contacted FEMA and this added to their willingness to listen to the caller.

"Government agencies, including FEMA do not make phone calls to individuals to notify them that they are eligible for a grant". Unfortunately this is a common scam and often increases in area's of natural disaster.

Last year BBB received over 1,100 reports on Scam Tracker of fake government grants.

To receive FEMA funding you will be required to complete an application. Links to FEMA are on the BBB website "Disaster Resource Center" or you can "Google" FEMA Disaster Relief.

How the Scam Works:

Scammers contact you through phone calls, emails, or posts on social media. No matter the medium, the message is similar: FEMA is awarding "free grants." You are told that your application is guaranteed to be accepted, and you will never have to repay the money. You can use the "grant" to pay bills, or make repairs.

When you reply to the ad or take the bait on the phone, the scammer claims to be a "government agent." The con artist congratulates you on being eligible for the grant and asks you to call another number and enter a Code ID#. Then, you will go to your local WalMart to obtain your grant., but first you have to pay a "processing fee".

BBB offers the following tips to help you avoid these "FEMA" scams:

Be careful with unsolicited calls asking for your banking information. Scammers will cold call, asking basic questions to see if you qualify for a grant, and then ask for your banking information saying they need to collect a one-time processing fee and directly deposit your money.

Don't pay any money for a "free" government grant. If you have to pay money to claim a "free" government grant, it isn't really free. A real government agency won't ask you to pay a processing fee for a grant you have already been awarded.

Look-alikes aren't the real thing. BBB has received numerous calls from consumers claiming "FEMA" approved them for a grant. Just because the scammer claims to be with "FEMA" doesn't mean they are.

Phone numbers can deceive. Some con artists use internet technology to disguise their area code in Caller ID systems. Although it may look like they're calling from Washington DC, they could be calling from anywhere in the world.

For more tips on how to be a savvy consumer, go to bbb.org. To report fraudulent activity or unscrupulous business practices, call the BBB Hotline: 903-581-8373 or report it via BBB ScamTracker.

Here's how not to inadvertently buy a flood-damaged car from Harvey or Irma

By Dave Kunz

[ABC7](#)

September 15, 2017

Part of the cleanup in the wake of Hurricane Harvey in Texas and Hurricane Irma in Florida involves lots of flood-damaged vehicles.

"Seven to 800,000 cars. I'd be surprised if it were less than that," said Matt Jones, senior advice editor for Edmunds.com, discussing the potential total of submerged cars being pulled out of flooded parts of the two hurricane-affected areas.

It's almost a sure bet that some flood-damaged cars will soon be on the market, and unfortunately purchased, by unsuspecting buyers.

Jones demonstrated how to inspect a car for water damage, beginning with the interior.

"I start looking for stain lines: straight lines across the interior that might suggest this car was submerged in water up to that point," he said

But it's not just cosmetics. In fact, some mildew would be the least of your concerns in owning a flooded car.

"Depending on how much of the car was submerged, your anti-lock brakes might not work. Your airbags might now work. Your seats may not adjust. You might have a lot of electrical problems that you're not aware of until it's time for them to actually do their job," said Jones.

Corrosion is a slow process. Fragile electronic components can be fine at first, but give expensive trouble later on, possibly months or years down the road.

Jones said one of the best places to check a car for flood damage is at the back in the cargo area.

Whether it's a sedan, an SUV or a minivan, you want to go back there, open up access covers to places like the spare tire compartment, and really start digging around thoroughly.

Specifically, check the area around the spare tire and even the spare tire itself. Also look for surface rust on the lug holes of the spare wheel, and on things like the hold-down hardware that keeps the spare in its place.

If you're in doubt about any particular car, spend the money to have a qualified mechanic give it a once-over. Reputable dealers and honest private sellers will have no problem with this. If they do, there are lots of other cars out there.

You should also run a vehicle's VIN through sites like Carfax and AutoCheck, though there will often be fees to do this. But like hiring a mechanic for an inspection, it could be money well spent.

Hurricanes Irma and Harvey are causing an insurance adjuster shortage

By Kai Ryssdal

[Marketplace](#)

September 15, 2017

There's some insult being added to the injury in Florida this week. On top of the flooding and the wind damage — and damage to property of other kinds — it's especially difficult right now for Floridians to get their insurance claims processed. The problem being that a lot of the insurance adjusters are in Houston, because Harvey got there first.

Leslie Scism wrote about Florida's insurance adjuster shortage today in the Wall Street Journal. Marketplace host Kai Ryssdal spoke with Scism about her piece. Below is an edited transcript of their conversation.

Kai Ryssdal: You point out in this story that Florida is especially vulnerable to this kind of shortage just because of the way the insurance market works. Explain that a little bit.

Leslie Scism: Florida has a very unusual market and it has developed in this unusual way since Andrew in 1992. The big insurance companies, the big household name home insurers, have been shrinking their footprint there. In their place have come a lot of small to mid-size insurers. They don't tend to have these big fleets of in-house adjusters so they turn to what's called the independent adjuster market.

Ryssdal: So that's where the competition is. Freelancers basically is what is what most of them are?

Scism: Right.

Ryssdal: And is there then the commensurate supply/demand thing going on that if you're an insurance gesture in Florida you're doing alright?

Scism: A lot of companies are scrambling to find enough insurance adjusters now to handle Irma's claims and they're having to raise pay. So if you're still in Florida and you're an independent adjuster you're gonna make a little more money than you would have, had Harvey not already hit. And some of those Harvey adjusters are coming back

to Florida now but they're wrapping up their work or some of them are leaving before they wrapped up. But they're eager to come back to Florida and get the higher pay now.

SOCIAL LISTENING

Hurricane Harvey – Social Listening Report – 9/15/17 1513 CST

Compiled by: Zella Campbell

This report is being distributed to the 4332 Joint Field Office, FEMA External Affairs at Headquarters and Region 6, FEMA Office of Response and Recovery, Red Cross, USCG, and HHS/ASPR.

Summary: The conversation as it relates to Hurricane Harvey has remained steady since yesterday and earlier report. Survivors are becoming more and more frustrated with having issues with hotels not accepting vouchers and not seeing any temporary FEMA trailers. There are mixed views between the public and the survivors with their concerns with how effect the recovery process with will flow with the shortage of leadership within FEMA. Governor Abbot's decision to extended Corpus Christi state-mandated deadline for the city to adopt a budget and property tax rate is receiving a lot of positive reactions. Debris cleaning continues to be a slow process throughout Texas to the point it could fill up a major college football stadium 25 times. The Edgebook County is actively and positively working hard toward rebuilding and reopening business. Houston Metro will be providing free rides for students K-College and their parents throughout the month of September. Both the public and animals shelters continue their hard work towards placing displaced pets back with their family or foster families. Moderate amount of survivors and the public are engaging positively to a post of a blog from an AmeriCorps member experience helping in the shelters. A moderate but positive amount of residents are reacting positively to an images of the temporary tents for displaced survivors in Port Arthur. Some of the public are sharing a video displaying the barges that were suppose to have been temporary homes for survivors and stating that they are floating FEMA camps.

Report sections

- [FEMA Conversation](#)
- [Operations](#)
- [Public Perception](#)
- [Rumors/Misinformation](#)

FEMA Conversation

Both the public and the survivors are having mixed reactions to a post from the weather channel stating that [FEMA shortage of leadership will cause issues in the recovery stages](#) for both Harvey & Irma.

- Some of the survivors are informing the public that FEMA is doing their job well.
- A moderate amount of the public are blaming the issues on the president and him taking a long time to nominate leaders.

HOT FEMA ISSUE

Survivors continue to post their frustrations with hotels continuing to not accept FEMA hotel vouchers and yet to see any temporary FEMA trailer homes are gaining similar but low frustration from survivors. ([Example 1](#)) ([Example 2](#))

- Survivors feel with all the money being raised that there should be funds available to get trailer.
- Survivors feel as if nothing is being done when it comes to temporary housing.
- Some survivors are still [asking for hotels that are accepting vouchers](#) and other local residents are providing options.

Operations

RECOVERY:

- An international foundation post a video showing the residents of Edgebrook County positively working towards [rebuilding and opening of businesses](#) is receiving moderate but positive reactions from both local and non-local residents.

ANIMALS:

- Efforts continue with animal shelters and the public to help displaced pets get reconnected with their families or with a foster family. ([Example 1](#)) ([Example 2](#)) ([Example 3](#))

TRANSPORTATION:

- As of yesterday at 20:07 CST Houston Metro announced that throughout the whole month of September they will provide [free rides for students K-College & their guardians](#).

Public Perception

- A moderate amount of survivors are having positive response towards a blog post from an AmeriCorps member sharing her experience helping in the shelters. ([Example 1](#)) ([Example 2](#))
- A major news outlet article stating that the [debris caused by Harvey could fill a major college stadium 25 times](#) is gaining shocking reactions but moderate amount of attention from both local and non-local residents.
- Local news outlet article stating that Governor Abbott extended Corpus Christi [state-mandated deadline for the city to adopt a budget and property tax rate](#) is gaining positive reactions from local residents.
- A local resident post of [pictures of tents set up in Port Arthur](#) for survivors is gaining positive but moderate reactions from local residents.

Rumor/Misinformation

- A lot of the public are retweeting a video of the barges that were suppose to have been temporary housing for survivors and stating that they are really floating FEMA camps. ([Example 1](#)) ([Example 2](#)) ([Example 3](#))

External Affairs
DR 4332-Texas